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INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

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AF/S FOR MSHIELDS
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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

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TAGS: [KPAO](#) [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [MZ](#)
SUBJECT: U.S. ELECTIONS INSPIRE INTROSPECTION IN MOZAMBIQUE

REF: 08 MAPUTO 637

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Responding to the great public demand here for information and insight on the U.S. elections, Public Affairs hosted Mozambican university students for a pair of programs on July 31 and August 5. In learning more about democracy in the United States, the students, who are looking ahead to Mozambican local elections this November and a national vote in 2009, considered their own electoral process, including its weaknesses. END SUMMARY.

Crossing Party Lines

¶2. (U) On July 31 and August 5, Public Affairs sponsored two events for Mozambican students to learn more about the U.S. elections and interact with American Mission members. The first, a roundtable that included 15 international relations students and three Embassy officers, provided an opportunity for the well-informed participants to ask questions of the "experts."

¶3. (SBU) The students were surprised to hear that one Embassy Officer had changed his party affiliation over the years, remarking that such a move would be rare in Mozambique. One participant wondered if a voter in the United States would suffer any repercussions for doing so. (COMMENT: In Mozambique where the two main parties emerged from the opposing sides of a long civil war, positions are hardened. It is uncommon for politicians and ordinary voters to shift their political allegiance. END COMMENT.)

"Americans Vote Twice"

¶4. (U) On August 5, Information Resource Center (IRC) members were treated to a presentation of IIP's Elections 2008 PowerPoint in Portuguese and modified to compare Mozambique and the United States. The session prompted a thoughtful discussion and insights into Mozambican elections. The students were interested to learn that the United States generally has just two main candidates representing their respective parties in a national presidential election, whereas in Mozambique, the original field of candidates represents many parties.

¶5. (U) Students furthermore noted that a single Mozambican political party would never put forward several candidates but rather would confirm internally within party ranks the expected leader - very unlike the U.S. primary process. "Americans vote twice," the students commented when they realized that the primaries are not the final step in selecting the U.S. president. For the students, the nomination process involving several individuals from the same party contrasted sharply with the Mozambican system and demonstrated that the party process itself is also democratic.

COMMENT: Attention Drawn to Mozambican Elections, too

¶6. (U) Interest in the U.S. election appears inexhaustible, particularly among youth. The programs of the past few weeks follow

on a well-attended U.S. elections debate (reftel), and are part of post's plan to continue to engage Mozambicans, especially students, on our election. Post has effectively used a number of IIP products in translation, including the candidates' biographies, Elections In Brief, and the Elections 2008 PowerPoint. These programs and the valuable discussions they generate gain added significance as Mozambique looks ahead to municipal elections in November, and national elections in 2009. END COMMENT.

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